

**TESTIMONY OF JENNY KOHL**  
**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**MARCH 1, 2023**

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and honorable members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jenny Kohl and I am the Community Outreach Coordinator at The Diaper Bank of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the FY 24-25 Budget for Human Services Agencies. I urge you to support increasing The Diaper Bank of Connecticut's allocation of state funding.

I started at The Diaper Bank as a graduate level intern having little experience with babies and while embarrassing to admit - the truth is - I had no concept of the importance of diapers. Within a short few days of getting to know the organization, however, it became so very obvious that a diaper is not just a diaper. Families who struggle to afford an adequate supply of diapers experience negative health, economic, and educational outcomes. A diaper is not just a diaper, it's a basic essential need. But unlike other basic essential needs, such as food and housing, there are no continuous safety net programs for diapers.

Now, as the Community Outreach Coordinator at The Diaper Bank a large piece of my job is to raise community awareness around the importance of diapers. With this responsibility, I've spoken with a wide range of business, philanthropic, and student groups and without fail, one of the first questions I always get is, "are diapers covered under WIC or SNAP?" While we're certainly not advocating for diapers to be covered under WIC or SNAP, as it would take away from essential nutrients that these programs provide, it raises an interesting point. The general public is honestly shocked that there are very few resources available for families in regards to diapers.

During FY 22 - 23 the Diaper Bank was appropriated \$700,000 annually. This funding allowed us to serve over 6,100 throughout the state. While we are grateful to have sustained this funding in the governor's proposed budget, we know that we are beginning to scratch the surface of need. One in three families in our state are struggling to afford these basic essential items. According to DSS's most recent data, close to 90,000 children 4 and under are enrolled in Husky A. Many of whom would directly benefit from our services. Increasing the State line item is imperative to maintain and expand the existing level of distribution.

Research shows that when families are forced to stretch the lifespan of a diaper, babies are much more likely to experience urinary tract infection, diaper rash, and other diseases associated with infrequent diaper changing. Lack of access to diapers directly affects the health and safety of babies. Families across Connecticut need your support. I urge you to prioritize the health, safety, and well being of families. Thank you again for your time and all you do to serve this great state.

Jenny Kohl  
Community Outreach Coordinator

The Diaper Bank of Connecticut  
[jenny@thediaperbank.org](mailto:jenny@thediaperbank.org)  
203-934-7009x116